

LES FILMS PELLÉAS PRESENTS

PIO  
MARMAÏ

ADÈLE  
HAENEL

DAMIEN  
BONNARD

VINCENT  
ELBAZ

AND  
AUDREY  
TAUTOU



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CANNES

A COMEDY BY  
PIERRE SALVADORI

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films

LES FILMS PELLÉAS PRESENTS



# THE TROUBLE WITH YOU

A COMEDY BY  
PIERRE SALVADORI

2018 – France – Comedy – French – 107'

## SYNOPSIS

In a town on the French Riviera, detective Yvonne is the young widow of police chief Santi, a local hero. When she realizes her husband was not exactly the model of virtue so idolized by their young son, and that an innocent young man, Antoine, has spent 8 years in prison as Santi's scapegoat, she is thrown into turmoil. Yvonne wants to do everything she can to help this very charming Antoine get back to his life and his wife. Everything that is, except telling the truth. But Antoine is having trouble adjusting to life on the other side, to say the least, and soon blows a fuse leading to a spectacular sequence of events.



# INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE SALVADORI



## Tell us how the film came about.

For a long while, I had been thinking of a Hitchcock-like innocent who, upon getting out of jail, decides to commit the crime for which he was wrongly convicted. I had a genre movie, a thriller, in mind. I began writing it but the subject was too slight: I was taking it towards a plot-based film, the story of a hold-up...

A chance conversation with my mother revived the project. «You know», she told me, «*it's mothers who make fathers. I've always portrayed your father as a little more glorious, a little kinder, a little stronger, a little more everything than he perhaps really was...*» Her words stayed with me. They led to the idea of mixing the two subjects: the innocent who gets out of jail and this woman who tries to tell her son that his father was a bent cop through her bed-time stories.

**From the outset, our expectations of a thriller plot are thwarted: the cops are blatantly disinterested in the accused, pursue imaginary criminals...**

By discrediting them in this way, the audience immediately understands that it is not watching a thriller, that the quality of the film and its intent lie elsewhere. It was vital to shift it onto another plane. This gives birth to improbable characters like the psychopath who passes through the film lugging around his aunt's remains in plastic bags or the killer that is greeted with virtual cries of enthusiasm...

**Yvonne, the mother (Adèle Haenel), has a mountain of tasks to accomplish: free her son but also restore a form of justice for the innocent that her husband got unjustly sentenced. And to rebuild her life after a widowhood that is all the more painful because the man she lost is not the one she thought she loved. Above all, she feels guilty: a theme that runs through all your movies.**

That is a wonderful driving force for comedy. Guilty people always have a lot of psychological depth, they are empathic, moving and rarely at peace. It is all the more interesting in Yvonne's case because she bears the burden of someone else's errors. She realizes that she has lived with a stranger, but do we ever know who we are dealing with?

**Yvonne wants to mend things but, at the same time, never confronts**

**reality: she could talk to her son or see the judge dealing with Antoine (Pio Marmaï); she chooses another way.**

She is a character who tries to solve problems by dispensing with the truth. She is desperate to hide it: from her son so as not to sadden him, from Louis (Damien Bonnard) who is in love with her, so as not to worry him, from Antoine, unjustly imprisoned, to avoid exposing herself. Many things can be done out of guilt: lying, hiding, manipulating, sleeping with someone. This obviously produces comedy but it is above all very human and that's what touches me.

**She lies, like all the other characters in the movie and... like those of your previous movies.**

People often think that I am obsessed with lies and masks, but they are simply one of the mainsprings of comedy and also of life. What interests me are the situations they create. Yvonne does not tell Antoine that she is the wife of the man who set him up and that she is a cop. And so Antoine thinks that she is interested in him for other reasons. Yvonne's withholding of the truth also creates this misunderstanding and confusion. She follows him and surrenders to him out of guilt and he believes he loves her because she understands and cares for him. They are so beautiful that we think they are bound to fall in love and I really like this misinterpretation. It was important to make the audience accept that she loves Louis and leaves with him, while Antoine returns to Agnès without

there being anything normative about it. I thought it was good to aim for this paradox and I liked the idea of Antoine returning to Agnès and her incredible love.



**As soon as he is released from jail, Antoine is like a grenade about to explode: he talks to himself, thinks he can do anything as if he had superpowers, while losing his footing in the face of his true identity.**

His feeling of injustice is accompanied by that of lost time. He has been robbed of his youth and he naively believes that he can catch up with it, just as he believes that he can dispel this injustice in permanent transgression. Only his wife, Agnès (Audrey Tautou), tries to reason with him; she displays an almost heroic pragmatism.

To protect and save him, Yvonne, who refuses the truth, can only use insincerity to reassure him: « *It's normal to bite that man's ear off!* » she tells him. « *In your shoes, I'd want to bite too...* » Her feelings of guilt push her towards complacency. She does what she can, she «patches» him up, it feels good and that's why it is virtuous.

## **Both women use strong, very literary arguments.**

In constructing the screenplay, we realized that these characters would find themselves in powerful situations and that they would have to explain themselves, justify themselves and persuade others. They would have to talk a lot. Then, when I started to write the dialogue, I quickly realized that they needed articulate, punchy and colourful language. In writing the dialogue, I was initially very afraid of this literary side, but then I told myself that I needed to accept and amplify it. That it could become one of the pleasures of the film. So I accepted it and worked on it.

## **The character of Agnès, who may seem secondary, is very important.**

She is essential. I like her concerns when Antoine gets out of prison. She thinks he must have incredible expectations and is afraid of not being able to offer him what he needs. I like the strength of her love, intact and whole to the point of severity. She guesses his desire for violence and knows that she must oppose it with a form of rigor to protect him. She is strong, tolerant and calls herself into question. I really like the character.

## **Yvonne and Antoine are genuinely lost. This is particularly obvious when they go down to the sea, each one expressing his or her malaise out loud.**

He is a little contagious and so she too starts talking to herself. This is their

first dialogue and they do not speak to each other. They are swayed by existential questions. He wonders if he is crazy, if he has become a monster and if he should go on living. She wonders about her past, her life; basic human interrogations found in some of my characters.

## **We know your love of the absurd. Here, more than ever, you multiply improbable situations.**

The plausible does not interest me. The truth, yes. When Louis says to Yvonne, «*Come, there's a killer at the fair, we'll get him*», and she follows him blindly because she wants action, that interests me. It expresses her will to live and her desire for emancipation. She has been robbed of a part of her life and her work, she needs to free herself from the dead.

## **You opt for long poetic sequences: the scene through the bathroom door when the Antoine-Agnès couple expresses its love and fears is painstakingly written.**

I just love that. I have the feeling that comedy allows for it. I often opt for highly written, lively dialogue in my films. But I did not always accept its literary dimension. I always tried to counterbalance it with a fairly familiar tone. This time, I decided to accept it. In writing the screenplay, I told my producer, «*If I could, I would write the whole film in verse.*»



### Poetry also dictates Antoine's return home...

The character of Agnès is not ready for their reunion: she does not expect it and the surprise is greater than her joy. So, she asks Antoine to start over, to come back to the door. This time, the emotion is there, even though we know - and she knows - that it is false. Then, she pushes him even further: « *Come back, come back again, but now stop on the path as if you were hesitating.* » I planned out and shot that scene as if I was filming a director directing his actors. We played « *Delerue* »-style music, movie music. Yes, I hope it's a poetic scene. That's what I was aiming for. It sums up all the love I have for this art. For fiction. I believe, like this character, that fiction enchants us and helps us to live. It is also the image of a couple that saves itself, as if it were sometimes necessary to introduce this into our lives to keep going.

### You replay the scene almost identically when Yvonne leaves prison.

The film needed this alluring symmetry. She talks to herself, takes the same bus...

You have previously worked twice with Audrey Tautou. THE

**TROUBLE WITH YOU is your first collaboration with Adèle Haenel. She is hilarious when she prevents Antoine's arrest after the fight near the nightclub by brandishing her police badge.**

The situation is pure burlesque and this is one of the areas that she wanted to explore; even though I have the impression she was afraid of it. This acting style is the very opposite of the realism and naturalism that she may display in certain films. I loved working with Adèle. She is someone who goes spontaneously to filmmakers and who fights for the film, giving it a lot of energy. A fighter! She does not just play a part, she integrates the film's form and espouses it. It was not always easy for her: she had to learn by doing it... I asked her to watch Julia Roberts in ERIN BROCKOVICH who really has a burlesque body. Adèle is very intelligent. Ten days after the start of the shoot, she had understood everything. The necessary sincerity in improbable situations, the abandonment, the emphasis and the technique all that requires. Breaks in tone, double-takes... I could ask anything of her

**She is very feminine in the film. Did you give her specific references?**

I asked her to watch two Lubitsch movies and two by Jonathan Demme, and in particular to study Katharine Hepburn, for her rapidity, and Lauren Bacall, because I really wanted her to look very feminine. But maybe it was

just to ask her to see movies I like, as a way of introducing myself. I never work with actors before shooting, I do not rehearse and prefer to go directly from writing to shooting - I do not want the option of rewriting. I have to get to work on the movie. The actors arrive on the set and the comic imperative dictates the rhythm, movement and tone.

**You're also working again with Pio Marmai whom you directed in DANS LA COUR**

On that set, I sensed he could become a kind of alter ego, a regular collaborator. He is focused, precise and inspiring. He has amazing technique and a lot of presence. He understands my work, appreciates it and the feeling is mutual. I have the impression that we can both contribute a lot, count on one another and I like this idea of an alliance.

**Was it easy to find the actor who plays Louis?**

No. It was a long and complicated process. I needed to find an actor to oppose Pio's physical energy and edginess. Philippe Elkouby, my casting director, who has unfortunately passed away since, and who had an incredible sense for faces, persuaded me to pick Damien Bonnard whom I had spotted in Alain Guiraudie's RESTER VERTICAL. Damien has something solid, ironic and very charming that creates a rich opposition with Pio.

**A childish side too. He puts on a Zorro mask to kiss Yvonne and leaves it on, lies to her clumsily...**

Antoine has the mask of a monster and Louis that of a child. They need them because they are both scared. And Louis's big lie is the only way he has found to keep the woman he loves near him. The whole film is marked by these twists on one or two initial ideas that can sometimes seem a little stupid or limited when we write. The mask comes from the S&M scenes at the start of the film and then it allowed us to show the mental state of the characters - their limitations, their anger or their animality. The only police chase is a phony one. Basically, if you know how to listen to your movie and watch it while you're making it, it becomes self-sufficient and provides itself with the keys and motifs all the way through. As with these masks found on the heads of male characters throughout the film, from the trash bag on Pio's, to the cabinet on Vincent Elbaz's.



**Let's get back to the character of Yvonne and the stories she tells her son: they are worthy of Hollywood's greatest action movies. It is impossible not to think of James Bond.**

The references are deliberate, yes. Part 80s Belmondo, part James Bond. With Camille Bazbaz, the composer, we even thought of using music similar to that of those films for a while. But it was too much. We opted instead for the soul music of the sixties, with a hint of Blaxploitation.

Yvonne's stories are the backbone of the film: a woman tries to tell the truth to her son about his father through brief fiction tales. In the end, the child takes over these stories to the point of telling his own. He grows up, begins to free himself.

**You're not exactly familiar with these kinds of action sequences...**

No, but it was stimulating. You have to come up with ideas, it takes a lot of patience and a lot of background discussion around the staging and tone of the movie with the stuntman. After the nightclub for example, Agnès says to Antoine: «It wasn't like you were fighting, it was like you were tidying your office.» That is typically the kind of dialogue used to choreograph the fight. We had to find the right dose of irony and violence. They were important scenes, they had to be funny, almost parodic but remain dynamic.

**Another frantic action scene: the robbery of the jewellery store with Yvonne and Antoine in S&M gear and the security guards, commenting on events as they unfold.**

It's as if they're at the movies, they are captivated, cry and eat popcorn... And they watch a fairly intense scene: a robbery in latex suits, Pio with his horns, Adèle, with her tiny zippers over her eyes, the shattered display cases, the profusion of jewels, the fight, the melodrama of their parting... It was a tricky sequence to cut. We had to sacrifice things to preserve the emotion that exists alongside a rather trivial form of humour and keep everything fluid. More than rhythm, a film is movement.

**You have once again written the screenplay with Benoît Graffin.**

This is our fifth screenplay together. He really is a key partner. We theorize a great deal at the outset because that helps us to write; we look for ideas, we have slight intuitions and then things happen. In setting out the characters for THE TROUBLE WITH YOU we immediately had the feeling that they would be marked by interesting themes, human themes. They were strong, in strong situations. This allowed for a lot of digression and poetry. When Benoît left to make his own film, I met Benjamin Charbit and we carried on together. They have the same approach. It's pretty funny. We talk a great deal, we theorize and digress a lot before coming up with the idea for a scene.

**On the other hand, this is the first time that you have worked with the director of photography Julien Poupard.**

Yes, I had appreciated his beautiful but never pretentious lighting and especially the very bright and contrasting colours on DIVINE, LES OGRES or PARTY GIRL. I had wanted to make a colourful movie for a long time. And I loved working with him. He brought me his energy, his wonderful sense of framing and of colour. I tried to bring him my love of ellipsis and staging. In fact, there were quite a lot of changes in the usual crew with the exception of sets, costumes and editing.

**Those were a lot of changes for someone who likes to work «with a family»...**

Yes, so I had to do a lot of explaining. You cannot impose your decisions, you have to persuade the crew that your directing choices are right. Julien, for example, had a tendency to work with a hand-held camera, which I am very wary of. It can quickly hijack directing or editing. I did not always feel that it was necessary to document the shot from the inside. But, in the end, most of his suggestions, as well as those of the first assistant, proved to be right, dynamic and inspired. All that can be uncomfortable, sometimes

confrontational and exhausting, but it is particularly stimulating. And we find ideas along the way. This new crew shook me up a lot and brought me a great deal.

**Did you have any references in mind for the film?**

I like staging, style, ellipsis and understatement. I still admire the same directors: Lubitsch, La Cava, the great classic American filmmakers. On this film in particular, there is also the influence of Jonathan Demme and his two comedies from the 80s: SOMETHING WILD and MARRIED TO THE MOB.

Highly stylized, colourful and zany comedies; tales of emancipation with strong female characters. Before shooting, I also showed those two movies to the director of photography and to Adèle.

For THE TROUBLE WITH YOU, the competition from TV series may have spurred me on: how can it be countered? How can we oppose the over-scripting of series, with their digressions and twists, their profusion of characters? A fake plot, linearity, irony in the narrative, a form... That is what I have tried to achieve. Ultimately, the subject of THE TROUBLE WITH YOU may be primarily the importance of fiction and film in our lives and my belief in my work and its usefulness. This theme runs through it.

# DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

THE TROUBLE WITH YOU – 2018

IN THE COURTYARD – 2014

DE VRAIS MENSONGES – 2010

PRICELESS – 2006

THE SANDMEN – 2000

COMME ELLE RESPIRE – 1998

LES APPRENTIS – 1995

CIBLE ÉMOUVANTE – 1993

# CAST

ADÈLE HAENEL	Yvonne
PIO MARMAÏ	Antoine
VINCENT ELBAZ	Santi
AUDREY TAUTOU	Agnès
DAMIEN BONNARD	Louis

# CREW

Director	Pierre SALVADORI
Screenplay	Pierre SALVADORI Benoit GRAFFIN Benjamin CHARBIT
1 <sup>er</sup> Assist. Director	Jean-Basptiste POUILLoux
Script	Christelle MEAUX
Casting	Philippe ELKOUBI (OHM STUDIO)
DOP	Julien POUPARD
Sound	François MAUREL
Costumes designer	Floriane GAUDIN
Editing	Géraldine MANGENOT
Post-Prod Director	Juliette MALLON
Producers	Philippe MARTIN David THION
Production	Les Films Pelléas
International Sales	mk2 films

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